

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE EASTERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA

JEANETTE EILEEN BENZIGER,

Plaintiff,

v.

COMMISSIONER OF SOCIAL
SECURITY,

Defendant.

Case No. 1:21-cv-01454-HBK¹

ORDER GRANTING AWARD AND
PAYMENT OF ATTORNEYS FEES UNDER
THE EQUAL ACCESS TO JUSTICE ACT

(Doc. No. 19)

Pending before the Court is the parties' stipulated motion for award of attorney's fees filed on August 15, 2022. (Doc. No. 19). The parties agree to an award attorney's fees and expenses to Plaintiff's attorney, Francesco P. Benavides of the Law Offices of Francesco Benavides, of seven thousand twenty-six dollars and ninety-five cents (\$7,026.95) pursuant to the Equal Access to Justice Act ("EAJA"), 28 U.S.C. § 2412. (*Id.*).

On July 27, 2022, this Court granted the parties' stipulated motion for a remand and remanded the case pursuant to sentence four of 42 U.S.C. § 405(g) to the Commissioner for further administrative proceedings. (Doc. No. 17). Judgment was entered the same day. (Doc. No. 18). Plaintiff now requests an award of fees as the prevailing party. *See* 28 U.S.C. § 2412(a)

¹ Both parties have consented to the jurisdiction of a magistrate judge in accordance with 28 U.S.C. §636(c)(1). (Doc. No. 9).

1 & (d)(1)(A); Fed. R. Civ. P. 54(d)(1); *see* 28 U.S.C. § 1920; *cf.* *Shalala v. Schaefer*, 509 U.S.
2 292, 300-02 (1993) (concluding that a party who wins a sentence-four remand order under 42
3 U.S.C. § 405(g) is a prevailing party). The Commissioner does not oppose the requested relief.
4 (Doc. No. 26 at 1).

5 The EAJA provides for an award of attorney fees to private litigants who both prevail in
6 civil actions (other than tort) against the United States and timely file a petition for fees. 28
7 U.S.C. § 2412(d)(1)(A). Under the Act, a court shall award attorney fees to the prevailing party
8 unless it finds the government's position was "substantially justified or that special circumstances
9 make such an award unjust." *Id.* Here, the government did not show its position was
10 substantially justified and the Court finds there are not special circumstances that would make an
11 award unjust.

12 Based on the stipulation, the Court finds an award of \$7,026.95 is appropriate. EAJA
13 fees, expenses, and costs are subject to any offsets allowed under the Treasury Offset Program
14 ("TOP"), as discussed in *Astrue v. Ratliff*, 532 U.S. 1192 (2010). If the Commissioner determines
15 upon effectuation of this Order that Plaintiff's EAJA fees are not subject to any offset allowed
16 under the TOP, the fees shall be delivered or otherwise transmitted to Plaintiff's counsel.

17 Accordingly, it is **ORDERED**:

18 1. The stipulated motion for attorney fees and expenses (Doc. No. 19) is **GRANTED**.

19 2. The Commissioner is directed to pay to Plaintiff as the prevailing party EAJA fees in
20 the amount of seven thousand twenty-six dollars and ninety-five cents (\$7,026.95) in attorney
21 fees and expenses. Unless the Department of Treasury determines that Plaintiff owes a federal
22 debt, the government shall make payment of the fees to Plaintiff's counsel, Francesco Paulo
23 Benavides of the Law Offices of Francesco Benavides, in accordance with Plaintiff's assignment
24 of fees and subject to the terms of the stipulated motion.

25 Dated: August 24, 2022

26 
27 HELENA M. BARCH-KUCHTA
28 UNITED STATES MAGISTRATE JUDGE

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